

Bend it like beckham review essay

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Jesminder Bhamra (Parminder K. Nagra) lives in London with her traditional parents.

Her father (Anupam Kher) and mother (Shaheen Khan) are thrilled to have their eldest daughter Pinky (Archie Panjabi) marrying a nice Indian boy. Jess isn't interested in things like that; she's more concerned with soccer and fantasizing playing next to her idol David Beckham. Her parents are not fond of this hobby, but as long as it does not interfere with her future, they grudgingly go along with it. Then events set up a path for Jess that will interfere with her parents' idea of their daughter's future.

Jess is recruited by Jules (Keira Knightley) for a non-professional league. The coach Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers) is impressed with Jess' skills and agrees with Jules that she would be an asset to the team. Her parents find out and do not approve. Her mother attempts to replace the love for sports with a knowledge of cooking, but it only fuels Jess' desire to escape the fate her parents have in store for her. She begins to sneak out, feigning employment to play.

There are complications, of course, and for the most part, they logical develop from the characters. Primary to the movie, of course, is the conflict between Jess and her parents. The film manages to make their concerns frustrating but also understandable. The mother is focused on decency and custom and wants her daughter to learn the traditions of a normal Indian woman; her father has his own personal history with sports that guides his doubts. He was a great athlete but after arriving in England, he was met with

racism that kept him competing. He just doesn't want his daughter to have to experience that kind of disappointment.

In a way, we feel bad for blaming them; after all, they are relatively progressive. They have decided to allow their daughters to choose who they will marry for themselves. Shaheen Kahn plays the mother at a level of caricature that is funny because it seems natural. Anupam Kher is the father, who is given much more room for development. The way in which Kher plays the father's progression is touching. There's a pair of scenes near the end of the film where he finally comes to realize that his daughter needs to play in order to be happy and, of course, that's the only thing he wants for her. There's also development with Jules and her parents, although it's not nearly as successful because she's a secondary character. It shows, especially when the relationship turns into a predictable case of mistaken sexual orientation ("Lesbian? I thought she was a Pisces.

"). Jess and Jules have a believable friendship, so we're invested in their eventual fight when a romance develops between Jess and Joe, with whom Jules has an infatuation as well. The romance is refreshing because it's not important to Jess' succeeding or being happy; it only complements her success on the field.

All of it turns out all right, of course, and there's a big game with an American agent who's come to watch Jess and Jules. A lot of nice messages develop from the characters. Jess does what she wants but it's only when she confronts her parents truthfully that she is able to do play with a clean conscience. There's also a respect for and comfort with the characters'

culture that could come only from one who has lived it, and director Gurinder Chadha's cheerful reverence comes through strongly. With all of these conflicts—and with most of it off the field—there's not a lot of time for soccer. There are training sequences and game montages, but they're there solely to remind us that the game is important to the characters. It's never to us: it's a Macguffin.

I realize that I've spent most of this review simply talking about Bend It Like Beckham's story, but it's that kind of movie. There's nothing much to analyze, it's simply a nice story, affectionately told, and worthy of the “feel-good” label.